



GLYCIPHILA FULVIFRONS: Swains:

*J. Gould and H.C. Richter del et lith.*

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# GLYCIPHILA FULVIFRONS, Swains.

## Fulvous-fronted Honey-eater.

*Meliphaga fulvifrons*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 317.—Lewin, Birds of New Holl., pl. 22.

*Glyciphila fulvifrons*, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 326.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 319.

*Philedon rubrifrons*, Less. Voy. de la Coq.

*Wy-ro-dju-dong*, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

*White-throated Honey-sucker*, Colonists of Swan River.

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THIS species would appear to be distributed over the whole of the southern portion of the Australian continent, since it is to be found in New South Wales, South Australia and at Swan River, where it is particularly abundant on the limestone hills near the beach around Fremantle; it is also an inhabitant of Van Diemen's Land, and all the islands in Bass's Straits. I have never observed it in collections from the northern coast of Australia, whence I infer that it is confined to those portions of the country mentioned above. In Van Diemen's Land it is by far the most abundant on the north side of the island, while in the neighbourhood of Hobart Town it is rarely, if ever, seen.

Independently of a slight difference in structure, the habits of this bird differ sufficiently from those of the true *Meliphagi* to fully justify its separation into a distinct genus. In the first place it affects very different localities, preferring to dwell among the trees that crown the low stony ridges, rather than those growing on the lower lands or the brushes; its flight is also very rapid, and, which is rather remarkable for the smaller Honey-eaters, it mounts high in the air, and flies off to a distance with an extremely rapid horizontal and even motion. It is an exceedingly active bird among the branches, clinging about and around the flowers of the *Eucalypti* in search of food in every variety of graceful position.

The site generally chosen for its nest, as observed at Swan River, is some low bush or scrubby plant, in which it is often placed so near the ground as almost to touch; it is of a deep cup-shaped and compact form, constructed of dried grasses, and frequently lined with *Zamia* wool, or buds of the *Banksia* cones; sometimes, however, sheep's wool is employed to impart warmth and softness; the materials in fact depend entirely upon the nature of those that the locality may furnish, while in the form of the nest little or no variation occurs. The eggs are large for the size of the bird, and are often much lengthened in figure; sometimes they are quite white without the least trace of spots, but they are generally blotched with large marks of chestnut-red; occasionally this colour is very faint, and spread over the surface of the shell as if stained with it; in other instances the marks are very bold and decided, forming a strong contrast to the whiteness of the other part of the surface: the medium length of the eggs is ten lines and a half, and breadth seven lines; they are usually two in number, but the bird very frequently lays and hatches only one. The breeding-season lasts from August to February.

The song is rather remarkable, being commenced with a single note slowly drawn out, and followed by a quick repetition of a double note, repeated six or eight times in succession; it is mostly uttered when the bird is perched on the topmost branch of a tree.

Its food consists of the pollen of flowers and insects.

The sexes present the usual difference in size, the female being somewhat less than her mate; but in the colour and disposition of the markings they are alike. The young, of which an accurate figure is given in the accompanying Plate, has all the upper surface dark brown streaked with buffy white, and is entirely destitute of the fulvous colouring of the forehead and the lunulate markings on the sides of the chest; the throat, moreover, is of a dull wax-yellow, the chest mottled dark brown and buffy white, and the primaries edged with a dull wax-yellow.

Forehead and under surface of the wing fulvous or tawny; over each eye a narrow line of white; a line of brownish black commences at the base of the bill, surrounds the eye, passes down the sides of the neck and chest, and nearly meets on the breast; behind the ear-coverts a narrow stripe of buffy white, separated from the line over the eye by a small patch of black; centre of the back dark brown, with a stripe of ashy brown down the centre of each feather; the remainder of the upper surface and flanks ashy brown; throat and abdomen white; wings and tail dark brown, the wing-coverts and primaries margined with olive; irides brown; bill blackish brown; legs and feet greenish grey.

The figures are those of a male, a female, and a young bird of the natural size, on one of the *Banksias* of Van Diemen's Land.